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ABSTRACT

Based on a Council on Library and Network Development (COLAND) study mandated by Wisconsin Statutes, Chapter 347, Laws of 1979, this publication recommends that state aid to public library system resource libraries be increased by 10%, with the funds to be used strictly for resource library collection development. Issues examined during the study and the need for a proposal related to state aid for public libraries are outlined. Desirable and undesirable features of the current status of resource libraries are listed, with desirable features including local control of public libraries and the current coordination of collection development on a systemwide basis, and undesirable features including inadequate public library system funding and the concomitant channeling of library funds into staff and maintenance rather than collection development. The minimum functions of a public library system resource library are outlined, including serving as a system interlibrary loan clearinghouse, providing a backup library collection for system libraries; cooperating with the library system in a coordinated collection development program, and providing reference and referral services for system libraries. It is also recommended that the impact of the state aid proposal be evaluated five years after the enactment of the proposal into law. (ESR)

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REPORT OF THE

COUNCIL ON LIBRARY AND NETWORK DEVELOPMENT

ON

STATE AID TO PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM

RESOURCE LIBRARIES

Madison, Wisconsin
May, 1983

PREFACE

This report is the result of a Council on Library and Network Development study mandated by Chapter 347, Laws of 1979. The Council was mandated to study the desirability of providing state aid to public library system resource libraries and to make recommendations to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction who shall transmit the recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature.

The Council on Library and Network Development is Advisory to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and the Division for Library Services. Members of the Council are:

Philip Martell, Chair, Public Library Trustee, Marinette
Douglas Baker, Director, Northwest Library System, Ashland
Henry E. Bates, Jr., Director, Milwaukee County Federation Library System, Milwaukee
Janice Beaudin, Public Service Librarian, Helen White Library, University of Wisconsin, Madison
Mary Lou Bohen, Director, Mauston Public Library, Mauston
Carol Diehl, Library Media Director, New London Public Schools, New London
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Jacqulyn C. Shropshire, Citizen Member, Milwaukee
Paul D. Starr, Director of Library Services, Carroll College, Waukesha
James Stauff, Citizen Member, Janesville
Bernard Wirth, Citizen Member, Wisconsin Rapids

The study of state aid to public library system resource libraries was carried out by a subcommittee: Ruth Harris, Chair, Douglas Baker, and James Stauff. Dottie Hiebing was liaison from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, Division for Library Services.

INTRODUCTION

The seventeen county and multi-county federated public library systems in Wisconsin are required by Chapter 43 of the Wisconsin Statutes to provide services to the residents of the system areas in order to receive state aid. The services they provide include interloan of library materials, reference and referral, honoring of valid borrowers' cards of all public libraries, rapid and regular delivery and communication systems, professional consultant services, and in-service training for library personnel.

Each system has a public library in a community with a population of at least 30,000 which serves as the resource library for the system (with the exception of one system which contracts with a public library in an adjacent system). Currently, the system resource libraries carry out some of the system services and may or may not be reimbursed by the system performing the services.

In order to develop recommendations regarding the desirability of providing state aids to public library system resource libraries, the Council on Library and Network Development (COLAND) examined related issues from several points of view, they polled directors of public library systems and of system resource libraries, and they asked a Department of Public Instruction attorney for a definition of "resource library" as found in the Wisconsin Statutes.

Some of the issues which the Committee examined and which were mentioned in the system directors' and resource library directors' responses to the poll are as follows:

1. Nature and extent of the contractual relationship between the public library system and the resource library.

2. Services which are now provided by the resource library including interlibrary loan, reference and referral, audio-visual materials sharing, open access to all system residents, and training/continuing education.

3. Definition of "headquarters" and "resource" library.

4. Statutory specifications for resource libraries, including population of the resource library's municipality and designation of the resource library in the system plans.

5. Implications of systems and resource libraries having different directors and having the same director.

6. Number of resource libraries per system.

7. Libraries other than public libraries serving as resource libraries.

A Department of Public Instruction attorney who examined Chapter 43 of the Wisconsin Statutes and the Wisconsin Administrative Code s. PI 6.06(5) for definitions of "resource library" discussed the following in his report:

1. The Legislative Council note to 43.15 (Laws of 1971) states " . . . that public library systems will have enough population to justify and fully utilize the wide range of services and facilities necessary for modern effective library service."

2. The statutes indicate a relationship between system compliance for state aids and the responsibility of the headquarters and/or resource library to provide the mandated services.

3. The statutes mention the responsibility of systems in developing library resources and library material collections to meet service needs and that standards for public library systems will be based on book resources and other library materials.

4. The Division for Library Services is given broad discretion by the statutes in the term "resource library" through its review of the library system's plan for library services--especially in regard to the appropriate sharing of library resources to benefit the clientele of all libraries.

5. The Administrative Code sets forth two standards for headquarters and resource libraries by stating that a system shall designate a public library in a city of at least 30,000 population as its headquarters library or establish an administrative headquarters and contract with a public library in a city of at least 30,000 to serve as its resource library.

PROPOSAL FOR STATE AID TO SYSTEM RESOURCE LIBRARIES

COLAND has approved the following proposal for state aid to public library system resource libraries, and COLAND members believe that it presents a method for vigorous statewide promotion of public library system resource library collection development while retaining local system control over the details of this development. COLAND intends that the proposal serve as a starting point for future decisions that will be made on reimbursement to resource libraries. It is hoped that the library community and Department of Public Instruction staff will react to it, adapt it and carry it forward to implementation.

Need for This Proposal

The proposal addresses the need expressed by resource library directors, boards of trustees of resource libraries, and governing officials of resource library municipalities for a clearer definition of the role of the resource library in public library systems and for adequate reimbursement for filling that role.

In recommending reimbursement for collection development the proposal recognizes the need for improvement and enrichment of significant library collections across the state so as to provide a broader base for all public library service programs. This need was also established in the "Public Library Development and Funding Study" prepared by Metrics Research Corporation for the Division of Library Services in 1982. The author, Marilyn Gell Mason, states on page 55 of the report:

> "Beyond the marginal costs, however, are the fixed costs of sustaining the resources to be shared. The system should be a significant source of revenue for collection development if sharing is an important activity. Yet, systems vary widely in the amount of support they give their resource libraries for collection development."

COLAND's concern that the Wisconsin statutes do not adequately define the role and minimum functions of public library system resource libraries was confirmed by a Department of Public Instruction attorney. COLAND believes that in order to satisfy the need of resource libraries for accountability and in order to develop the collections of libraries, the statutes should more directly define resource libraries and their relationship to library systems. COLAND also feels that the scope of resource library collection development as it differs from that of state level resource providers needs to be defined.

Desirable Features of the Current Status

COLAND acknowledges that the following advantages of the current status of resource libraries can also be viewed as disadvantages, depending on one's perspective:

1. The location and number of public library system resource libraries are now determined by public library system boards with the planning advice of the Division for Library Services.

2. The nature of contracted services between the public library system and resource library is now a local decision.

3. A determination of the nature and priorities of resource library collection development is now a local decision.

4. The existing negotiation process between the public library system and its resource library or libraries accommodates local differences and requirements.

5. Public library systems now coordinate collection development on a systemwide basis.

Undesirable Features of Current Status

Through the poll of system directors and resource library directors, through informal discussions with members of the library community, and through personal experience, COLAND has have developed the following list of perceived disadvantages of the current status:

1. Public library system funding is inadequate.

2. Resource libraries rarely receive enough system money to do more than stay even with the added demand for materials placed on them as resource libraries.

3. Merely staying even with demand is not an adequate incentive to ensure resource library interest in continued participation in public library systems.

4. Many resource libraries are presently underdeveloped.

5. During times of tight money, library funds may be funneled into staff and maintenance rather than collection development.

Recommendations

COLAND offers the following recommendations which will satisfy the needs described above and which will help to eliminate the perceived disadvantages of the current status of resource libraries:

1. Public library system resource libraries should be defined in the statutes as the public library(ies) which can serve the minimum functions of a system resource library (see below) and which is(are) designated as such by the public library system board of trustees.

2. State aid to public library systems should be increased by 10 percent and an additional public library system service requirement should be added to the statutes. To meet the service requirement, public library systems would utilize the additional funds for resource library collection development under the following conditions:

   a) Each system will certify the following to the Division for Library Services:

      1) that the funds have not been used to replace local resource library(ies) collection development funds,
      2) that the resource library(ies) meets a maintenance of effort requirement,
      3) that the funds be used strictly for resource library collection development and not for staff, technical processing or other contractual services (technical processing costs for these materials can be met through separate contractual arrangements between the resource library and the system).

   b) Each public library system and its resource library(ies) adopt a plan to meet accepted statewide resource library collection standards.

Minimum Functions of a Public Library System Resource Library

Although most public library system resource libraries carry out services which the statutes mandate for public library systems in order for them to receive state aids, COLAND believes that the minimum functions of resource libraries should be defined in statute to eliminate misunderstandings, to decrease areas for negotiations, and to increase accountability. The minimum functions are as follows:

1. To serve as the (or one of the) system interlibrary loan clearinghouse(s).

2. To provide a backup library collection for system libraries.

3. To cooperate with the library system in a coordinated collection development program.

4. To provide reference and referral services for system libraries.

Evaluation

COLAND recommends that at the end of the five-year period following the enactment of this proposal into Law, the Division for Library Services evaluate the impact of this proposal through the following:

1. An informal survey of the resource library directors, boards of trustees of resource libraries, and governing officials of resource library municipalities to determine their level of satisfaction with this structural change;

2. Measurement of the increase in the size of resource library(ies) collections;

3. Measurement of the increase of the resource library(ies) fill rate for interlibrary loan requests.